

MCAS Community Advisory Committee
Notes from Meeting on September 8, 2014

In attendance: CAC: Linda Caradine, Jeff Gosda, Glenda Hughes, Kara Kerpan, Megan Mautemps, Aaron Ray, Tonia Wagner. **MCAS:** Ann Potter, Mike Oswald. **Others:** Sue Dicile, facilitator, Michael Grimmit, DCS Ombudsman.

The meeting convened at 6:30pm

Minutes from the July 14, 2014 meeting were approved.

Announcements

The agenda was revised to include a preview of the draft property tax bill-stuffer flyer.

Ann made the following announcements:

- The Cat Crisis event was very successful. The primary learning from the event was “if you let people know they will step up.”
- A new Chief Field Supervisor has been hired. He is “energetic and full of ideas.” The Outreach position will be posted in October.

Shelter Tour Overview:

Tonia noted that she was unable to attend because of the lack of public transportation to the shelter, highlighting on the major problems with shelter location. Linda and Glenda shared their observations from the tour:

- The facility is small and “packed with equipment and storage”.
- “It is clear that the staff has put a lot of thought into the layout”, eking as much utility and flexibility from the space available as possible.
- The “nimbleness” and flexibility of uses was apparent. One example is the refuge areas made for animals overly stressed by the shelter. Refuge areas are in offices, under desks, in bathrooms, any spare quiet space available.
- Ann’s “passion for her job and the shelter really showed through.”
- Creative ways found by the staff to “find another chance” for animals, particularly cats, was apparent throughout.
- The lobby feels “institutional”. (Ann noted a current effort to teach volunteers to overcome the “lack of warmth” of the space with high quality service.)
- “So much is being done with so little resources.”

Another tour was requested. Mike encouraged CAC members to arrange individual tours during regular open hours.

Discussion: Notification of former pet owner of pet adoption

Ann overviewed the issue:

- Once an animal has been adopted it sometimes occurs that the former owner requests that the new owner be contacted about the possibility of giving the animal back, even though legally the dog belongs to the adopter. In the recent past the Shelter Director has complied because it seemed right, but doing so has created other dilemmas and is “heartbreaking” no matter the outcome. There is no existing policy on how to handle this issue. Ann noted that has come to believe that asking an adopter to return an animal is not a good practice, however she wants CAC perspective and advice.

- In response to a question about what is done pre-adoption to locate the owner of lost animals, Ann noted that MCAS goes to “great lengths to reunite lost animals with their owners” including posting photos on MCAS website, looking up contact information from license records, scanning for microchips, and having field officers follow up at addresses when phone numbers are not current. She noted that when an unlicensed and unchipped animal is brought to the Shelter finding the owner is very difficult.
- In response to a question about the length of time people have to find lost animals, Ann noted that it is 6 days with ID, and 3 days without ID.

CAC members contributed the following perspectives:

- If the Shelter is going to allow for the possibility of asking for the return of an adopted pet then people need to be informed prior to the adoption that although the animal is legally theirs they may be contacted at the original owner’s request.
- It seems like the Shelter staff take every effort to locate owners. Owners who don’t license assume a risk when they fail to do so. It is not fair to put the burden on the adopter.
- A ‘return to previous owner’ policy could create anxiety among adopters who would then fear to bond with and invested in the animal, and could be a dis-incentive to adoption.
- Whatever the Shelter decides to do on this issue there must be a clear policy that is consistently applied.
- At a minimum, the Shelter could explore “how it’s going” in a follow-up call. If the new owner expressed difficulties or regrets, the possibility of reuniting the animal with its former owner could be raised.
- The Shelter does a good job screening adopters and matching pets to prospective adopters. Notification is likely to benefit the former owner but not the adopter or the animal.
- Poll other shelters to see how this issue is handled elsewhere.

After discussion, the CAC unanimously encouraged MCAS not to assist former owners to get pets back from adopters, and to have a clear policy stating such.

MCAS Satellite Concept

Ann announced that MCAS has funding to pilot the concept of a satellite location.

- County Facilities is looking for a spot in close-in SE Portland.
- The concept will include adoptable pets, licensing, and the ACT program. It is not clear yet whether found cats can be kept at the satellite, but lost cats and dogs could be held for a day before transport.

Mike noted that:

- Elected officials have growing awareness of the need, and of the challenges of the current location.
- Funding is for a one year pilot only, so it will be staffed with existing MCAS staff and volunteers.
- The objective is a more visible location in the city.

CAC members made the following comments:

- OHS has a satellite on SW Macadam that does a high volume of adoptions, so the concept is apparently successful.
- Prior to opening there should be outreach in adjacent neighborhoods and via neighborhood newsletters and social media.
- Start location outreach now. Someone might have space to donate.

Property tax bill-stuffer flyer

A mock-up of the flyer was distributed.

Individual CAC members contributed the following suggestions:

- Consider using the flyer to publicize an event.
- The “Did you know?” section is good:
 - o Emphasize that animals at MCAS are 100% local.
 - o Make it punchier, e.g. “We accept all!”
 - o Indicate that adoption comes with spay/neuter, micro-chip, other.
 - o Highlight that the coupon is good for one year.
- Put the coupon on the website.
- The “autumn” theme is good, but a theme linking it to the tax bill could be considered.

Other business

- The idea of a “Secret Shopper” was raised as a means of helping staff identify strengths and areas of improvement regarding customer service. It was noted that it would need to be done in a way that is helpful, not punitive, to staff.

Next Meetings

- The next meeting of the CAC will be held on October 13th. THE OCTOBER MEETING WILL BE AT A DIFFERENT LOCATION. SPECIFIC LOCATION TBD.
- The October agenda will include the shelter review process.

The meeting adjourned at 8pm.